

# SCOUTING AS AN ELEMENT OF EDUCATION ORIENTED TOWARDS THE CHALLENGES OF UPBRINGING OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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## Abstract

The aim of this article is to present the tradition and methods of scouting used in upbringing of young people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The fundamental principles of the scouting movement are “duty to God”, “duty to our neighbour” and “duty to ourselves”. The first principle relates to man’s attitude towards spiritual values, the second one to his attitude towards the society, and the third one to the duties man has in relation to himself. In the study the Author described the Polish Scouting and its traditions. He also sketched the history of scouting used in the contemporary social education of young people (including the struggle for independence carried on by Polish scouts (Polish: *harcerze*)).

The scouting method and tradition as a way of relieving civilisation problems affecting young people nowadays were outlined. They involve using traditional methods in upbringing such as survival, and diminishing the role of electronic gadgets.

The Author enlarged also on the problems of social education – describing the role of the voluntary service scouts provide and the system of education of young people. Finally, he touched upon the internationalisation of the movement as a response to the challenges to education in the global village.

Keywords: Scouting, lifelong education, tradition, teaching methods.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The Polish Scouting and Guiding Association (ZHP) is one of the largest non-governmental and educational organisations for children and youth in Poland, having 100,000 members grouped into packs and troops. It is apolitical. For almost one hundred years, the main objective of ZHP’s operation was developing and shaping its members’ character comprehensively by issuing challenges to them. In 2018, Poland will be celebrating the 100th anniversary of regaining independence, and 100th anniversary of establishing the organisation named: The Polish Scouting and Guiding Association (ZHP). ZHP’s mission is to educate young people - that is to support them in their full development, and character formation by issuing challenges to them.

Scouting is an original Polish name coming from the word “harce” meaning “fun”, “games”, or “harcownik” - “a warrior” fighting in duels before starting a battle proper. In other countries, the expressions “skaut” is used, and in Ukraine the term “plast”. The Scout Oath reads: “I have a sincere will to serve God and Poland with all my life, bring help to fellow human beings, and adhere to the Scouting Law” [1].

In Poland scouting is still regarded with esteem. It is a respected and socially accepted form of education, bringing help to fellow human beings, and serving one’s homeland. For a few years now, the ZHP has seen a growing number of people registering as its members. At the beginning of 2016, a 7.2 increase was observed, and at the beginning of 2017 as well, when the increase reached 5.82%. A 2.09% drop in numbers has been noticed in 2018. According to the Board, the reason for this drop might result from the changes of the amount of a basic membership fee at the ZHP. [2] However, there is growing interest in scouting activities being observed; new initiatives are being introduced and scouting shops, i.e. specialised shops for scouts, being created, also the Internet ones, with a rich and varied scouting product ranges: from uniforms, books, camping equipment, through to gadgets. The ZHP is member of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) and the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM). Women are registered as members of WAGGGS, whereas men are members of WOSM.

## 2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF SCOUTING

The most pivotal period shaping the scouting ethos was the period of fighting for independence in the years 1918-1920, and the interwar era, when the movement was taking shape and developing. It was at that time when the idea of Polish scouting and its specific foundations came into being. Polish scouting, in the first period of its existence, fulfilled goals extraordinary for youth, however, in principle, they were in line with the idea of Robert Baden-Powell - the main scout of the world [3, p. 16, 20; 4]. They consisted in preparing scouts for future specialised military service, and in the case of Poland, it was an armed fight to regain independence. In 1795, Poland lost its independence for 123 years due to neighbouring countries' actions, and was subjected to the process of germanisation.

During the Polish-Soviet War in the years 1919-1921, scouts stood up to defend the Homeland. Each group received special tasks connected with participation in the war. Scouts aged up to 14 served as couriers, 14 and 15-year-olds were helpful in carrying out office work, and performed guard duties, whereas 17-year-olds and older were conscripted into volunteering service. Girl scouts from the age of 17 dealt with medical aid and auxiliary aid activities for the army [5]. A great number of scouts lost their lives in war or were murdered by Red Army soldiers as prisoners-of-war.

A form similar to scouting, but accomplishing pacifistic ideas was the Woodcraft movement, created by Ernest Thompson Seton, an American author and defender of nature and culture of American Indians. The main rule of this association was the love of nature, references to Indian customs, and parting with military practices, later on very widely applied in scouting. Despite its name, the organisation did not have anything to do with the scouting movement associated with the ideology of Baden Powell and the ZHP [6].

The ZHP during World War II was the only organisation that did not stop carrying out educational activities. In the years 1939-1945, the scouting organisation adopted the code name *Szare Szeregi* /*Gray Ranks*/, and girl scouts the name - *Związek Konieczny* /*The Association of Clovers*/. *Gray Ranks* was a youth organisation, and not a military one. Its purpose during the German occupation was to protect young generation against depravation. Its educational programme was adapted to three age groups. *Zawisza* is a group of the youngest scouts of *Gray Ranks*, comprising youth aged 12-15. Another group was a methodical group named *Bojowe Szkoły* /*Militant Schools*/, embracing scouts aged 15-17, and operating in Warsaw occupied by German soldiers. Their task was to carry out sabotage in the form of propaganda actions directed to Polish citizens. The campaign covered writing on walls, posting up posters and stickers, giving out leaflets, connecting to German loud hailers, tearing off German flags. The group of oldest youth, aged over 17, was known as *Grupy Szturmowe* /*Assault Groups*/, participating in active combat and sabotaging activities [3, p. 22, 23].

To sum up, more than one hundred years of the activity of the scouting movement covered the period of partitions, two world wars, functioning of the state under communist regime, as well as fighting for sovereign and democratic Poland. None of the historic upheavals prevented the scouting movement from functioning to this very day. It can even be said that it gave its members a chance to prove their merits, show fortitude and allegiance to the principles underlying this movement.

## 3 RULES APPLICABLE IN SCOUTING ORGANISATIONS

Under the Scouting Law, educational principles encompass a brotherly attitude towards others, a friendly attitude to all people, readiness and ability to serve other people, God, and Poland selflessly, and work to better oneself. A scout has to live up to their own high standards, even if others do not expect it from him or her. Nowadays, scouting service is understood in four aspects: 1) service to God – stemming from one's faith or personal attitude to life's spiritual values, such as: love, truth, good, justice, freedom, beauty, friendship, brotherhood, hope; 2) service to Poland – stemming from one's feeling of belongingness to the national and cultural community; 3) service to the Homeland – keeping guard over national dignity, respect for one's state and its history; 4) service to oneself and others – relating to personal responsibility for one's own individual development, attitude to the society, taking responsibility for one's family, a local community, as well as resulting from respect to others, and to the world of nature.

Children and youth who are members of the ZHP are divided into sections: Brownies and Cub Scouts, Guides and Scouts, Venture Guides and Venture Scouts and Rangers and Rovers. The youngest group named *Zuchy* /*Little Scouts*/ is made up of 6-8 year-old children. *Harcerze* /*Scouts*/ are children aged 9-12, whereas *Harcerze Starsi* /*Senior Scouts*/ gather youth aged 13-16. *Wędrownicy* /*Wanderers*/ are scouts aged 17-21. The oldest group are *Akademicy* /*Collegians*/, i.e. youth studying

at colleges and universities. The ZHP also embraces the troops of Nieprzetarty Szlak */the Unblazed Trail/*. Such is the code name of the activities of the Polish Scouting and Guiding Association among disabled youth and children [7, p. 12,15].

#### **4 METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF RESEARCH AND AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SCOUTING METHOD**

The paper forms part of research in the field of social sciences, based on the knowledge on philosophy, the theory of education and social pedagogy. The contents revolve around quality research referring to the phenomenological method, which as close to scientists, among whom there were people like: Edmund Husserl, Martinus J. Langeveld, Józef Tischner, Roman Ingarden, and Marian Nowak. This method, close to the theory of cognition and ontology, describes the state of things and leads to the understanding of the heart of the matter. The phenomenological method reveals the sense and meaning of particular phenomena. It is a method of observing and it has the value of being aware of something, in this case the phenomenon of the scouting movement. "The condition for gaining phenomenological experience is the way how a subject of cognition participates in it. One of the basic concepts in phenomenology is phenomenological description, understood as a description of facts, the course of a given process, the experience of manifesting oneself /realising oneself by a human being. (...) Phenomenology carries out research into awareness data, irrespective of the fact whether they are imaged or existing in real life. Then, it is a human being and the world of their values that is a subject of its research". [8] Phenomenology gives us a chance to live through and learn emotions and potentials connected with the scouting adventure: one's own capabilities and limitations, responsibility and affiliation with the organisation, making choices between one's own needs, and needs of members of a community.

The purpose of scientific cognition is to describe, explain and predict facts, processes and phenomena. Description means looking for an answer to the question: what is the present status of things? In explaining undergoing changes, we ask ourselves the question: why it is like that? In turn, forecasting is looking into the future and trying to find the answer to the question: how could it be in the future? Presenting the issues of scouting, monographs, documents and other types of literature have been analysed in order to describe the phenomenon of scouting in the past and at present [9].

The aim of the research was to enrich our knowledge on the specific nature of how the scouting organisation operates, especially in Poland. The following research problems have been put forward:

- 1 What are the characteristics of the specific nature of the scouting organisation in the past and at present?
- 2 What scouting methods are applied in educating children, youth and adults?
- 3 What values does participation in a scouting organisation bring to young people?

Aleksander Kamiński distinguished five elements of the scouting method: "a game, a troop, nature, a camp, ranks and skills" [10]. One of the basic elements of the scouting method is a system of small groups. Work in small groups brings palpable educational effects, since it is easier to reach everybody in a group, notice their worth and help them overcome weaknesses they have. In scouting such groups are six-member teams, troops, patrols and task teams. They are usually headed by peers having a slightly more experience in scouting work [11].

The basic unit of work in the scouting method is assemblies of a troop taking place every week and having their own schedule. They usually start with the so-called "tale telling" i.e. introducing into a topic by e.g. story-telling, later on there is the main object-related part, and then a summary and ritual closing, which can be different depending on a troop. All forms of work that are used in scouting are based on learning by action. Children and youth perform work based on play, games, searches and cooperation in a team [12, p. 23]. Members of a troop join an assembly by actively participating in proposed tasks. They prepare part of assemblies, e.g. by accomplishing tasks between assemblies. To ensure the best educational effects possible during assemblies, the forms are applied alternately, especially those forms which make it possible to be active all the time and check oneself.

Many people associate scouting with holiday camps, trekking, acquiring skills, i.e.: becoming a gardener, a keeper of fire, a cook, a pathfinder, etc. The skills are marked with 30 mm circles with an appropriate graphical symbol and worn on the right sleeve of the uniform. The level of difficulty is marked with a proper colour of the edging of the badge:

- one-star skills – the dark blue colour,
- two-star skills – the green colour,
- three-star skills – the red colour,
- master skills - the black colour [13, p. 6].



*Figure 1. Scouting skills.  
Source: Agnieszka Roguska*

Scouting can be not only an idea for education, but also a lifestyle. Choosing this kind of social and personal functioning is connected with participating in national celebrations, helping raise money, e.g. for charity, renovation of monuments, presenting the history of a region, and famous people from a town, a city or a region. Thanks to skills, people who learn them:

- acquire concrete knowledge and skills,
- develop their skills,
- discover new interests,
- learn how to be resourceful, entrepreneurial and reliable,
- learn respect for human labour,
- check their capabilities” [13, p. 3].

A scout team is an educational environment, and as such it cooperates with other entities, e.g. a school, a parish, non-profit organisations. It is important that cooperation with them is based on the principle of partnership. A leader is the head of a scout team, but the shape of particular programmes of actions, and organisational issues are decided upon in a democratic way. A scout team head himself or herself chooses their lieutenants.

A summer form of youth activities gathered in the ZHP is a camp. A troop organises a summer camp summing up the whole year's educational work [7, p. 26]. Among camps we can distinguish a permanent camp, wandering camps (sailing, horse-riding, mountain, biking, rafting camps), specialised camps and foreign camps. This variety allows us to learn new forms of activities, specify in detail one's interests or acquire new skills [12, p. 32]. The Polish Scouting and Guiding Association is the largest organiser of summer relaxation for children and youth in Poland. Each year around 80,000 children and youth take advantage of it [7, p. 26].

A form of a scout team's activities is also the NAL hostel (Nieobozowa Akcja Letnia/Non-Camp Summer Action), allowing scouts to develop their skills, scouting knowledge and interests, and ensuring safe and active relaxation in one's place of residence.

A scouting organisation, although it is based on principles developed at its early stage of existence, moves with the times, engaging in various kinds of activities. As part of performing their duties, scouts organised huge projects: Bethlehem Light of Peace, The Tournament of Scouting Troops, The Tournament of Squads, The Servicing of Youth World Days, Save from Harm - a scheme for making young people sensitive to violence, Messengers of Peace, projects of activities for benefit of the world, i.e. sharing with other scouts a certain number of hours worked for the Earth. The Conference of the European Region WOSM and WAGGGS Intercamp, scouting jamborees are organised [7, p. 28, 39].

The Unblazed Trail is a movement within scouting. The name symbolises continuous and persistent overcoming obstacles and difficulties with children socially maladjusted and disabled [14]. The name the Unblazed Trail refers then to troops acting in special education facilities, educational and care facilities, medical care centres, occupational therapy workshops, nursing homes. Nieprzetarty Szlak /the Unblazed Trail/ embraces children and youth up to 6 years of age, irrespective of the type and level of disability [15]. Unfortunately, this type of scouting method is rarely used in the settings of a special school, where the most important goal is rehabilitation. The Unblazed Trail troops also embrace youth threatened with demoralisation. More than 90% of pupils who joined scouting do not commit crimes any more. The use of the scouting method helps break links joining young people with criminal environment, and thus eliminates their identifying with criminal subculture [16].

## 5 SCOUTING AS AN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Scouting is based on the system of self-education and directing one's own personal development, which we find in stoicism in the form of living in accord with nature, setting oneself challenges. It is then based on concepts developed by James E. West, John Dewey, Sergiusz Hessen's theory of education, Florian Znaniecki. Scouting means not only adventure, most often experienced in one's youth, making new friends; it is the feeling of creating a community with others. Currently, at the time of electronic media, personal contact and authentic being together with one another in a group have been strongly thrown out of balance. Modern means of mass communication, like the Internet, a smartphone, are not rejected in scouting, but reduced to minimum, since the most important is cooperation and authentic, real, face to face contact, which allows us to build trust and rely on proven methods of functioning in a group, coping with difficult, and unpredictable situations.

Scouting is a very interesting phenomenon as an organisation and an educational system. It is governed by specific principles, but it is also based on something elusive, such as building relations in a group and perceiving oneself as an important element influencing its specific nature, internalisation, and fair play behaviour. The nature of scouting has been presented in the literature, e.g. in the following manner: "Scouting is not only an educational organisation or institution or a method or system of educational influences, or a social movement (very often a spontaneous one), but it is made up of all these things" [3]. Scouting helps prepare young people to live in a real community, not a virtual one. It teaches them to be creative, self-disciplined, and eliminates one's self-righteousness and egoism. The greeting itself, being at the same time the scouting motto and call "Chuwaj!" meaning "Be prepared" reminds each scout that he or she should be vigilant and ready to face difficulties and dangers using their body - they must keep fit; their mind - they must acquire knowledge and skills, and their will - by striving to reach goals they have set themselves.

Bogusław Śliwowski underlines that the scouting movement brings together all members all around the world, irrespective of differences how organisations of this type are run or cultural differences of their members [17]. There is no competition, but cooperation and satisfaction from working together, very often for the good of fellow human beings.

By participating in the scouting process of education, you have the feeling of belonging to a group. Friendships are established, and impressions and memories remain until the end of one's life. It is very important at the time of Herbert Marshall McLuhan's global village. In the world becoming global, we are coming close to each other in technical terms, but we are distancing ourselves from each other mentally, experiencing loneliness, and even desertion. David Riesman also wrote about the lonely crowd [18]. The author understood this term as disappearance of interpersonal bonds in modern societies. The civilizational development, apart from advantages it brings, also provides us so many external stimuli that almost compel us to act and reflect in various dimensions: in the area of personal views, beliefs, actions, aesthetics and morality. The transition from the manufacturing area to consumption, spreading of mass culture and new technologies, contributes to appearance to personality crises, feeling of loneliness, misunderstanding, the need to possess things rather than to be. This is confirmed by the research of Agnieszka Roguska and Alicja Antas-Jaszczuk: "The research findings pinpoint to life aspirations embodied in the life attitude: "to have in order to be". It means that such life orientation is chosen by students from Poland, Latvia and Belarus, practically approaching these two planes of a human being's functioning "to be - to have, putting them at the same level as very dependent upon each other" [19]. That was research covering students, but their attitudes must have resulted from their previous priorities and pursued values, then we can assume that they would develop already from the period of early youth.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

Scouting is an organisation creating a person's character and personality, enabling him or her to learn social and practical skills. Their members learn how to be reliable and responsible, acquire proper habits and attitudes, and are able to adopt various social roles. Being a scout is an honour, but also fun and huge responsibility. Volunteering is an inseparable part of functioning of a scouting organisation. It is a kind of lifestyle and way of understanding the world rejecting a sham, the glitter, bad habits, destruction of natural environment, and dishonesty in various contexts.

Scouting combines tradition with modernity. Foundations of scouting education set out in the Scouting Law and Oath have not lost their validity and are universal and permanent. Timelessness of scouting principles causes that they do not need to be updated.

The organisation can be an ally in educating young generation, supporting families, schools and educational facilities in this respect. On the one hand, it is characterised by its own symbolism, for instance, in the form of uniforms, adherence to specific rules and cherishing values. On the other hand, it takes care about personal development of each of its members, which is proven by one's acquiring various kinds of skills depending on their abilities and the level of their acquisition.

The small group method developed in the scouting movement is an exemplary way of educating the young generation observed by numerous educational and care entities. Moreover, teaching by engaging in action, and a variety of undertaken activities are still a desirable form of work in schools and a challenge for modern teaching in 21st century.

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